NAVAL INSPECTOR GENERAL

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

Subj: SENIOR OFFICIAL CASE 201301187; ALLEGATIONS OF

PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

BY MS. KATHERINE E. FLATTERY

15 January 2014



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Office of the Naval Inspector General

Case Number: 201301187

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XX December 2013

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BY MS. KATHERINE E. FLATTERY

Preliminary Statement

1. On 24 April 2013, a confidential complainant contacted the Naval Inspector General (NAVINSGEN) and alleged that
Ms. Katherine E. Flattery, Corporate Director for Information
Dominance (OPNAV N2N6C), engaged in a broad range of prohibited
personnel practices, 6,(6)(7)(C)

2. 6,(6)(7)(C)

3. Accordingly, we formed three allegations for investigation:

Allegation #1: That between September 2011 and June 2012,

Ms. Flattery gave improper preference to (b) (6).(b)

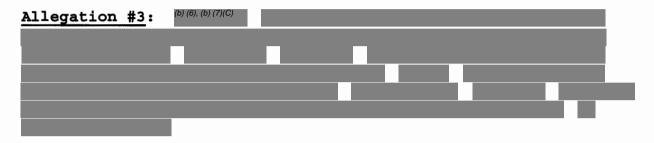
when (b) (6).(b)
applied for and accepted two different
positions with Ms. Flattery's staff in violation of 5 USC §
2302(b) (Prohibited Personnel Practices).

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Conclusion: The allegation is substantiated.



Conclusion: The allegation is not substantiated.

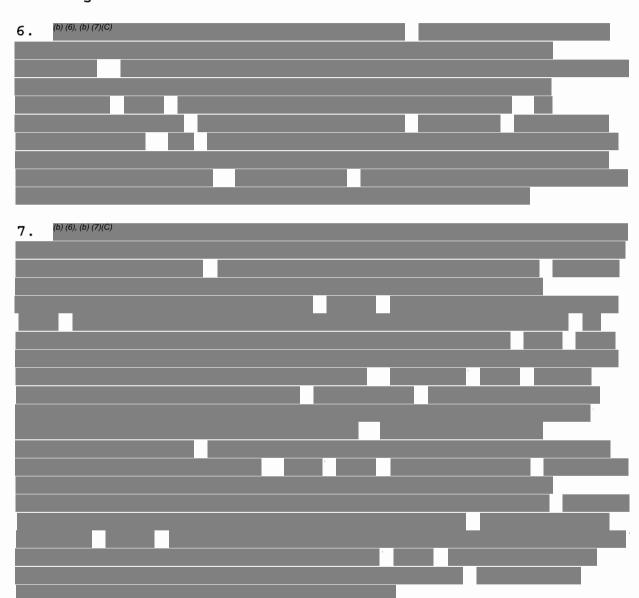


Conclusion: The allegation is not substantiated.

Background

- The complainant testified about a number of personnel actions that the complainant believed were improperly handled by the CIPO, one of several branches within N2N6C organization that report directly to Ms. Flattery. CIPO provided the HR management interface between the Naval Intelligence Personnel Community workforce of approximately 2,900 government civilian employees and the appropriate Office of Civilian Human Resources (OCHR) Operations Center whenever a civilian personnel action request was required to be processed. In the case of promotions for senior (GS-14/15 equivalent) leaders in the N2N6C organization, Ms. Flattery would typically sign and approve such requests before they were processed by CIPO and passed to the appropriate OCHR operations center for final administrative action. The complaint we received specifically alleged that Ms. Flattery "submitted" 13 non-merit based promotion requests in December 2012 after Ms. Flattery learned that there might be an across the board hiring freeze for Department of the Navy civilian personnel in 2013.
- 5. Among these 13 promotion requests, there were two for individuals that the complainant alleged Ms. Flattery had

already shown favoritism when the individuals were first hired. After an initial examination of the records associated with the hiring of $\binom{b(6)}{7/(C)}$ and $\binom{b(6)}{7/(C)}$, we determined that there was sufficient evidence to question the circumstances under which they had been hired. Accordingly, we identified both hiring actions as allegations for further investigation.



8. In addition to the allegations we identified to investigate, the original complaint raised a number of other concerns. After our careful consideration of these other concerns, we determined that they did not point to any additional credible allegations

of wrongdoing by Ms. Flattery. For the sake of continuity in this report, we discuss these additional matters raised by the complainant after our examination of the three allegations we investigated.

Allegation #1

9. That between September 2011 and June 2012, Ms. Flattery gave improper preference to (0)(6)(6)(b) when (0)(6)(c) applied for and accepted two different positions with Ms. Flattery's staff in violation of 5 USC § 2302(b) (Prohibited Personnel Practices).

Findings of Fact for Allegation #1

- is the daughter of (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) was an Intelligence Officer and she worked with but not directly for Ms. Flattery on a number of occasions when they were assigned together at the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) and on the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) in the Pentagon.
- 11. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) testified that after she retired from active duty in September 2009, she had infrequent, personal, contact with Ms. Flattery. She said when they talked or exchanged emails, it was typically about (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) new life as a civilian and her family. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) also said that her communication with Ms. Flattery after she retired was typically in conjunction with a retirement ceremony or some similar social event for someone they both knew and who had ties to the Navy's intelligence community.

- 13. On 23 September 2011 and following up on their prior communication, $^{[b](6),(b](7)(C)}$ emailed Ms. Flattery and stated that she "talked with $^{[b](6),(b)}_{(7)(C)}$ [and $^{[b](6),(b)(7)}_{(C)}$;] very excited about the possibility of doing an internship over her holiday break."
- 14. Later that same day, Ms. Flattery forwarded the email she received from $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)}$ to members of her staff and stated:

As we discussed. We will have $\binom{b \cdot (6) \cdot (b)}{(7)(C)}$ for less than a month but we could have her work a quick project with $\binom{b \cdot (6) \cdot (b)}{(C)}$. Perhaps [Joint Duty Assignment] stuff w/an Intelligence Orientation of sorts (take her around the community). Just need to know what is required and need to move out fast.

15. $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)}$ at the time, forwarded Ms. Flattery's email to and some other N2N6C staff personnel who would be responsible to process the necessary paperwork and hire $^{(b)(6),(b)}_{(7)(C)}$ wrote:

(b) (6), (b) (7)

Regarding this (6), student Ms. Flattery would like to bring onboard N2N6C for a winter internship, I spoke with (5)(6), (6) yesterday to get a feel for how this process would run and what we'd need to do [in order to] make this happen. Let's discuss first thing Monday morning when everyone is back at the office.

I know we have the DCIPS reviews going on now — the plate is more than full — **but this is high priority** for Ms. Flattery. (Emphasis added.)

- 16. According to documents in (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) Official
 Personnel File, on 27 September 2011, (b)(6),(d) , the (c)(C)(C) , approved an Intelligence Clerk position description for position K419A-1072299, certified that the statement of major duties and responsibilities were accurate and stated that the position was "necessary to carry out Government functions for which [he was] responsible."
- 17. On 19 December 2011, ${}^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)}$ began federal service as a full time excepted service employee. She was hired as an

Intelligence Clerk (GG-0134-04, Step 1) into position K419A-1072299 and her temporary appointment was not to exceed one year. The legal authority cited on her SF-52 (Request for Personnel Action) submitted to OCHR was 10 U.S.C. 1601.¹

- 18. When became as an Intelligence Clerk in December 2011, N2N6 did not have a student internship program in place. N2N6 guidance that established a student internship program that could have been used to hire became as an intern was not approved until 4 December 2012, approximately one year after before was hired.
- 19. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) testified that she only reported to work as an Intelligence Clerk during a three week period in December 2011 and January 2012 coincident with her winter break. She said she returned in April 2012 and worked one additional day during her spring break. Although hired into a full-time position, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) worked less than a month during her initial six-month period of employment from 19 December 2011 until 16 June 2012.
- 20. $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)}$ graduated from the $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(c)}$ in May 2012. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)}$ $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(c)}$
- 21. Ms. Flattery testified about the internship program she believed had been used to initially hire (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) She said "we put a pilot program in place and we hired (b)(6),(b) When we pointed out to Ms. Flattery during her interview that we were unable to find documentation of any N2N6 internship program having been created before (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) was hired, Ms. Flattery stated she had "no idea" why we were unable to find corroborating information about a program. She suggested we speak with (b)(6),(b) (7)(c) who she said "was in charge of putting [the internship program] in place."

 Ms. Flattery said "if one's not in place, then I'm clueless

All Defense Intelligence positions under the Defense Civilian Intelligence Personnel System (DCIPS) are in the Excepted Service by specific statute, 10 U.S.C. 1601. Under the statute, Excepted Service organizations like N2N6 are specifically excluded from competitive service procedures; however, Excepted Service organizations should have in place their own hiring system which establishes the evaluation criteria they use in filling their vacancies. N2N6 had not issued such guidance at the time (D) (6).

Was hired. (Emphasis added.)

because	(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)	[:]	said	that's	the	way	we	could	[hire	(b) (6), (b) (7)(C)
	"									
	•									

- 22. (b)(6)(b) was the (b)(6)(f) director in September 2011 when (f)(6)(b) was being considered for employment with N2N6C. We questioned (b)(6)(b) about his recollection of the facts related to (b)(6)(b)(7)(c) being hired as an Intelligence Clerk through an internship program. Although (b)(6)(b) initially testified that he was directly involved with hiring (b)(6)(b)(7)(c) he subsequently corrected himself and testified that he was thinking of another individual. (b)(6)(b)(7)(c) denied being directly involved with hiring (b)(6)(b)(7)(c)
- 23. When we questioned (5)(6)(b) further and explained to him that we were unable to find any documentation about an N2N6 internship program having been in place at the time (5)(6)(b) was hired as an Intelligence Clerk in December 2011, (5)(6)(b) testified:

We [were] writing the manuals. That is true. There was no such policy. There [was] old simple policy that was in place that, it wasn't favorably considered....²

24. On 21 May 2012, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) , who had taken over from $\frac{(b)(6),(b)}{(7)(c)}$ as the $\frac{(b)(6)}{(b)(7)}$ director, met with Ms. Flattery and (b) (6), (b) to discuss hiring (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) for a permanent (b) (6), position on the N2N6C staff. testified that at the conclusion of the meeting with Ms. Flattery, despite the objections he raised during their meeting, Ms. Flattery directed (b) (6), (b) to convert (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) from her temporary Intelligence Clerk position to a permanent Management Specialist position under the "N2N6 pilot internship program" that (0)(6)(0) stated he used to originally hire (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) About taking the personnel action to hire (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) in light of his expressed concern about doing so, (b) (6), (b) said he deferred

The Office Naval Intelligence Summer Intern Program offers students of approved collegiate programs the opportunity to work a minimum of 10 weeks during their summer break and to earn a competitive salary based on their level of education. After an initial internship, current interns have the option of continuing their internship on a part-time basis during the academic semesters and they may also elect to return for a minimum of two weeks during the winter break.

to the more experienced $^{(b)}_{(7)(C)}^{(b)}$ and Ms. Flattery's direction to convert $^{(b)}_{(7)(C)}^{(b)}$ to a permanent position.

25. (b)(6), (b) further testified that he was not familiar with the N2N6 pilot internship program that Ms. Flattery referred to in their meeting; the program (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) claimed during their meeting with Ms. Flattery was the basis for originally hiring (b) (6), (b) further testified that, as $_{(b)(7)}^{(b)(6)}$ director, if such an internship program had existed at the time was hired, he would have been aware of it. On this point, (b) (6), (b) stated he believed there was no proper from her temporary Excepted basis to convert (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Service position to a permanent Excepted Service position. said it was his expressed opinion, therefore, that (7)(C) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) should have only been considered for a direct hire appointment into a permanent Excepted Service position following established procedures.

26. On 22 May 2012, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) , an HR specialist providing administrative support to convert (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) from her temporary position into a permanent position, sent an email to certain members of the CIPO staff and stated: "I just talked with (c) (Emphasis added.)

Ratherine Flattery wants

(b) (6), (b) (7) (7)(C) (7)(C)

27. On 17 June 2012, (b) (6) (7)(C) was non-competitively converted from a temporary Intelligence Clerk position to a permanent Management Specialist position (GG-0344-07 Step 1). The full performance level of her new position was GG-13.

28. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

under Ms. Flattery, provided a statement about DCIPS
authorities related to hiring student interns and personnel for entry level positions. (a) (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

stated:

DCIPS does not have career ladders. DCIPS employs a developmental program to progress entry level workers noncompetitively from (pay range GG-7 thru GG-10) into the full performance work level (GG-11 thru GG-13).

N2N6 did not issue its first interim DON guidance on DCIPS until January 2013 after the personnel actions discussed here were processed. Further, this interim guidance was not coordinated with OCHR before it was released and it was subsequently withdrawn for proper coordination with OCHR.

Interns would be a different issue because they are brought in at the GG-4/GG-5 range in a temporary status but can be converted into an entry level position full time permanent position. (Emphasis added.)

- 29. On 20 November 2013, we provided Ms. Flattery the applicable portions of our draft report of investigation and notified her we tentatively concluded that she granted improper preference to Ms. Flattery was afforded an opportunity to comment about our tentative conclusion and provided her reply to us on 4 December 2013.
- 30. In her 4 December reply, Ms. Flattery stated that our tentative conclusion that she granted improper preference to was "quite simply, wrong." Moreover, Ms. Flattery wrote:

31. Ms. Flattery emphasized that her organization, as part of the Excepted Service, had direct hire authority. She wrote:

that she could use the established ONI internship program to hire $^{(b)(6),(b)(7)(C)}$ and also address some of the other hiring requirements her organization faced. In this case, however, Ms. Flattery said she "was informed, by $^{(b)(6),(b)}_{(7)(C)}$ that [she] could not use the ONI intern program, but [she] could start a pilot program...."

33. As previously discussed, the N2N6 student internship program was established on 4 December 2012. The program was modeled on the ONI internship program and called for student interns who completed the application process to be placed into temporary positions in an internship occupational series (0099). Thereafter, the student intern who graduated from a qualifying college or university and met the other eligibility criteria could be noncompetitively converted to permanent Excepted Service positions. (6) (6) (7)(C) was not hired under any student internship program. She was hired as an Intelligence Clerk in the 0134 occupational series.

Applicable Standards for Allegation #1

34. 5 USC § 2302(b) (Prohibited Personnel Practices)

Any employee who has authority to take, direct others to take, recommend, or approve any personnel action, shall not, with respect to such authority:

. . .

6. grant any preference or advantage not authorized by law, rule, or regulation to any employee or applicant for employment (including defining the scope or manner of competition or the requirements for any position) for the purpose of improving or injuring the prospects of any particular person for employment;

Analysis of Allegation #1

35. Pursuant to 5 USC § 2302(b), Ms. Flattery had an obligation to not grant any preference to $\binom{b \cdot (6) \cdot (b)}{(7)(C)}$ when she sought employment with the government unless authorized by law,

rule or regulation. We determined that there were no such exceptions that applied in this case.

- 36. We determined that Ms. Flattery exchanged emails with [6] (6), (6) (7)(C) and in their email exchange they discussed the future employment opportunities of [6] (6), (6) (7)(C) Subsequently, Ms. Flattery offered [6] (6), (6) (7)(C) a student internship position with her N2N6C staff and [6] (6), (6) (7)(C) accepted Ms. Flattery's offer of employment. Thereafter, Ms. Flattery directed [6] (6), (6) (7)(C) and other members of her staff to take the necessary personnel actions to hire (6) (6), (6) (7)(C) as a student intern.
- 37. We determined that N2N6C established their student internship program on 4 December 2012, almost a year after (5)(6),(6) was hired presumably as a student intern under an existing program. The collective testimony of Ms. Flattery, and be documentary evidence we reviewed established that the initial hiring of (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) was not as Ms. Flattery directed. We found no documentation of an existing internship program under which (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) Instead, (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) have been initially hired. was given a temporary, Excepted Service, appointment as an Intelligence Clerk; she reported to work for only a short period of time during her 2011-2012 winter break from the (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) and again for a single day during her spring break in April 2012.
- 38. We also determined that Ms. Flattery directed that (b)(6)(b) be converted from her temporary position to a permanent position following her graduation from the (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) in May 2012. Acting on her direction, in June 2012, Ms. Flattery's staff took the necessary personnel action to non-competitively convert (b)(6),(b)(7)(c) from her temporary Intelligence Clerk position to a permanent Management Specialist position.
- 39. We afforded Ms. Flattery an opportunity to review and comment about our tentative conclusion for this allegation. In her reply to us, Ms. Flattery highlighted the fact that whether her organization had a viable student internship program in place or not, [b](G),(b)(T)(C) could have been properly hired under the provisions of N2N6C's direct hire authority. We completely agreed with Ms. Flattery's point about the direct hire authority available to her and we determined that is

exactly what her staff used to hire (b) (6), (b) (7)(C) in the absence of a viable student internship program.

- 40. After Ms. Flattery directed her staff to hire [b](6),(b) [7](C) through a student internship program, her staff, most notably [b](6),(b) determined that there was not a viable student internship program through which [b](6),(b)(7)(C) could be hired. Understanding Ms. Flattery's interest in the matter, her staff used the available direct hire authority to employ [b](6),(b)(7)(C) as a temporary Intelligence Clerk, not a student intern.
- 41. The fact that (b)(6)(b)(7)(C) was hired as a full-time employee, worked less than a month during her initial six months of employment, but remained on the employment roles with N2N6C without having to report to work makes clear that she received special consideration. Accordingly, we were not persuaded by Ms. Flattery's explanation of the facts or her claim that the hiring of (b)(6)(b)(7)(C) for a temporary position in December 2011 and her subsequent conversion to a permanent position in June 2012 were done without favor being shown to (b)(6)(b)
- 42. We concluded, therefore, that a preponderance of the evidence clearly showed that Ms. Flattery violated the standard and caused improper preference to be shown to the daughter of a professional associate and friend, when, at her direction, was first hired as an Intelligence Clerk and again when because of the evidence of the evi

Conclusion for Allegation #1

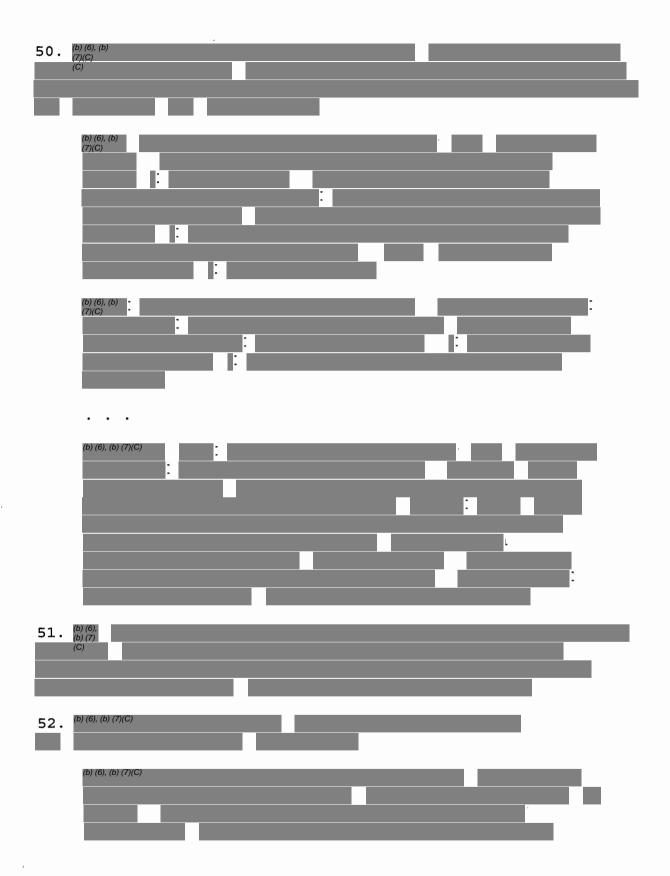
43. The allegation is substantiated.

Allegation #2

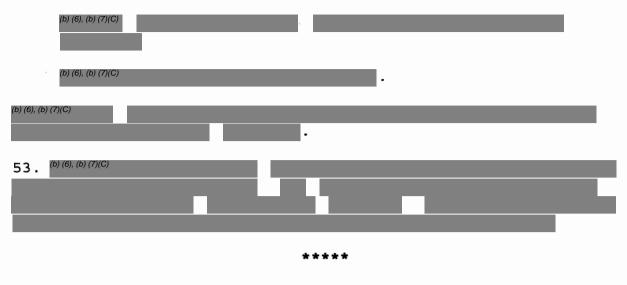
44.



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Applicable Standards for Allegation #2



Analysis of Allegation #2





Conclusion for Allegation #2

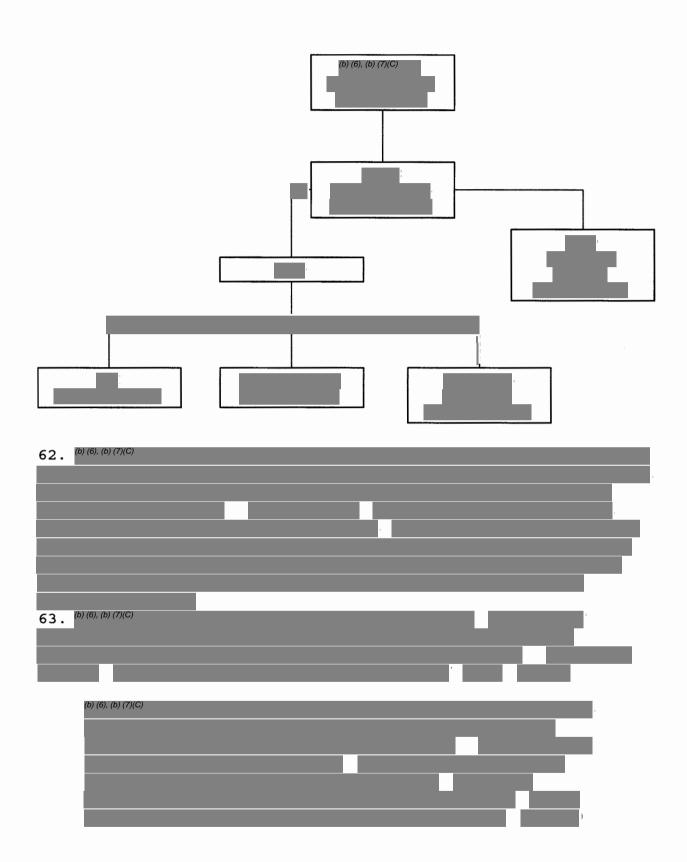
59. The allegation is not substantiated.

Allegation #3



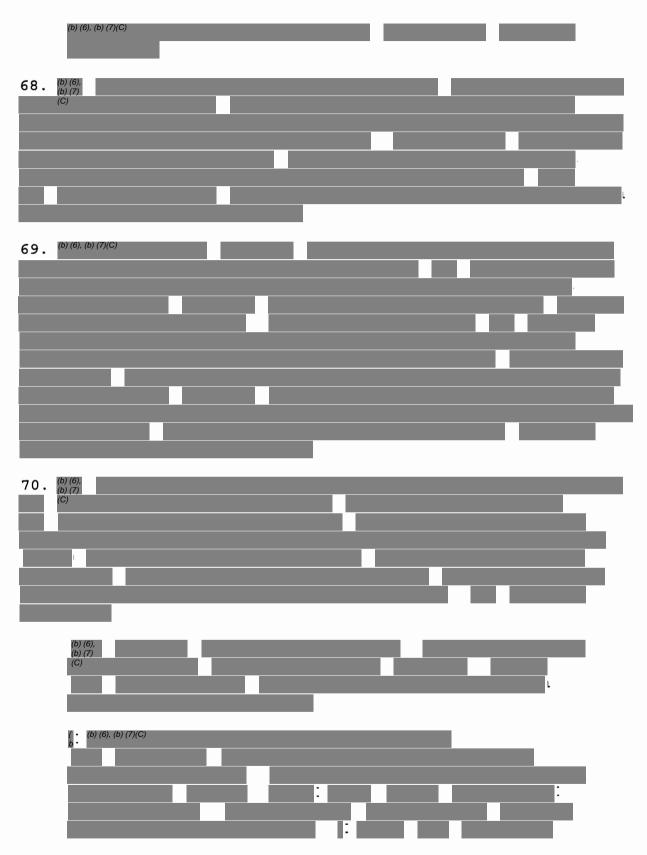
Findings of Fact for Allegation #3

61. (b) (6), (b) (7)(C)

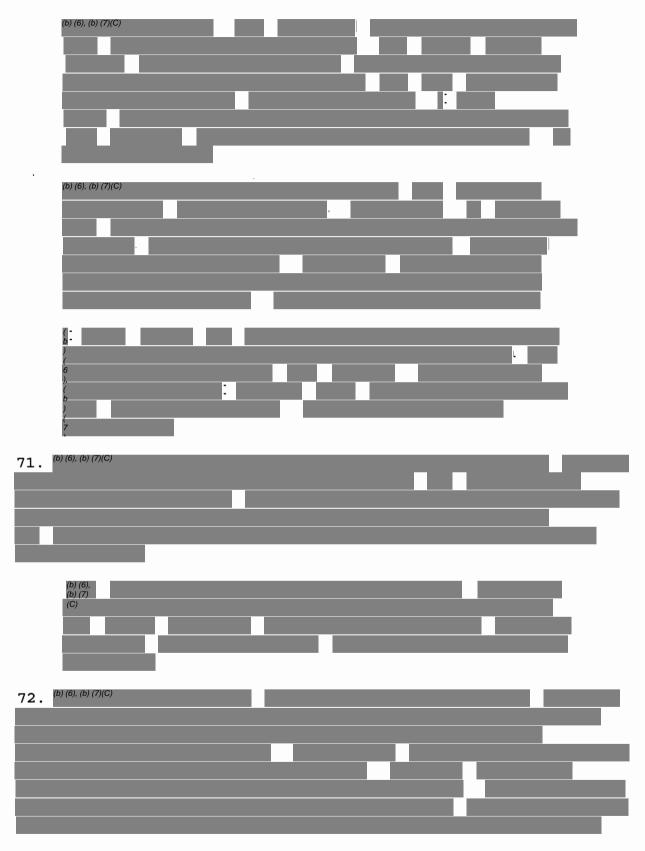




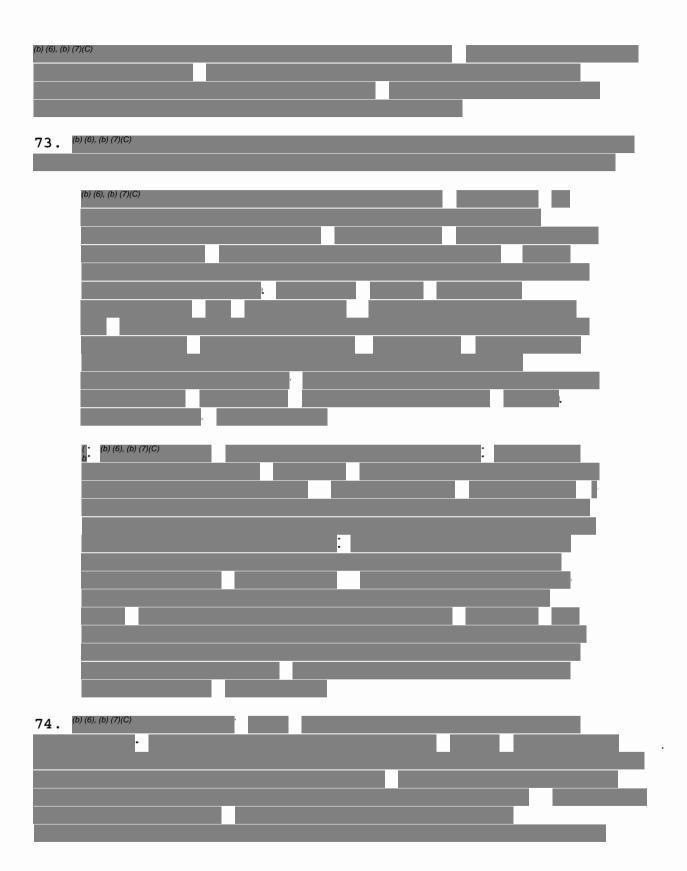
SECNAVINST 12250.6 was replaced on 17 January 2013 by SECNAVINST 12250.6A. The new instruction revised Navy policy and required that anyone assigned to an HRO position, e.g., CIPO director, would be a HR specialist; that is a 0201 occupational series employee. Moreover, the new instruction stated that: "The classification of positions performing substantive HR work in series outside the GS-200 occupational family and the assignment of substantive HR functions to positions classified outside of the GS-200 occupational series was prohibited."



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Applicable Standards for Allegation #3



Analysis of Allegation #3





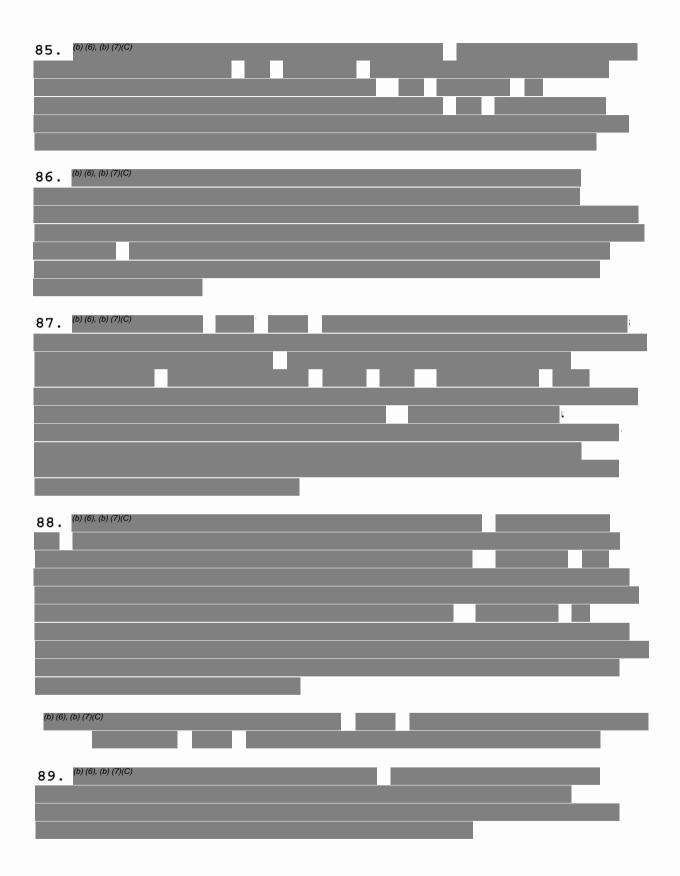
Conclusion for Allegation #3

80. The allegation is not substantiated.

Additional Matters Raised by Complainant

81. In addition to the three allegations we have reported on above, the complainant raised a number of concerns in her complaint. We collected information about these additional matters in conjunction with our investigation and determined that none of them rose to the level of a credible allegation of wrongdoing by Ms. Flattery. We determined, therefore, that these additional matters did not require further investigation. These additional matters are discussed now, however, for completeness in our reporting on the matters that the complainant brought to our attention and in order to document those matters that have been or are in the process of being appropriately addressed through separate management action by DASN (CHR), OCHR and/or by N2N6 leadership. In each case, we concluded that the action complained about was either directed by higher authority, based on a solid rational reason or not directed by the subject as the complainant believed.







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